



WESTERN
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FINAL Report of the American Samoa Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

NASAC Building Conference Room

Pava'ia'i Village, Tutuila, American Samoa

1. Welcome and Introductions

American Samoa Advisory Panel (AP) Vice Chair, Will Sword, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. Present at the meeting were members Brian Thompson, Dustin Snow, Sam Meleisea and alternates Joseph Faaita and Nonu Tuisamoa.

Also in attendance were Archie Soliai (Council Chair), Howard Dunham (Council Member), Nate Ilaoa (Council staff), Tepora Lavatai (Plan Team Member, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR)), and Michael Marsik (NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO)).

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff provided a summary of the American Samoa AP's previous meeting and recommendations and gave updates on the action items that were taken up at the 180th Council Meeting that took place in American Samoa last October.

In the discussion, one AP member said the priority for ice should be Pago Pago Harbor and he asked about DMWR's plans to reprogram SFF funds originally to be used and how they planned to ensure that ice machines for Manu'a would be more successful than the first time they were installed. The Vice Chair said the ice makers failed because the managers in Manu'a failed to maintain the facilities. An AP member added that the family barricading the facility from public use was also a big factor. Another AP member suggested that if funds are reprogrammed for more ice machines on Manu'a that they work with the American Samoa Power Authority to have it installed on their compound at Faleasao Harbor on Ta'u. It would be protected, and he suggested an MOU could be worked out for maintenance as well. The first AP member suggested that a guideline for usage and agreement to submit data in exchange for ice be developed. The Plan Team member informed everyone that DMWR had initiated an ice for data program and all fishermen have to do is call in to let her staff know when they will be arriving, and they can receive ice. She said the amount they can receive is based on the amount of fish they land. She also added that it has been primarily for commercial fishers, but they can also provide ice for recreational fishers as well. The ice provided by DMWR is party ice.

3. Council Issues

A. Update on Territorial Bottomfish

i. Territorial Bottomfish ACL

Council staff presented the Territorial Bottomfish Interim Measure, potentially reclassifying bottomfish, and members discussed the fishery.

The question was asked about whether PIFSC could re-do the bottomfish assessment. AP members discussed issues such as data from Manu'a not being included in the assessment, over-reporting of the number of fishermen, and lack of quality data. The Vice Chair suggested the AP make a recommendation for Manu'a fishers to be excluded from any potential action resulting from the bottomfish assessment since their data was not used.

AP members discussed issues in Creel survey and seafood vendor data collection related to coolers arriving from neighboring Independent Samoa via the Lady Naomi vessel and daily flights. There was concern about that fish being imported. Lavatai said DMWR's Enforcement Division staff does its best to monitor sea and air ports to track incoming seafood coolers. Treasury, which oversees Customs, has a form to log incoming fish but it only takes the overall weight of the cooler and the individual contents are not always logged.

ii. Territorial Bottomfish Rebuilding Plan

Council staff presented options for refining the Territory Bottomfish Management Unit Species and members discussed their options and decided unanimously that Option 2 was their preference. Members felt that creating a new benchmark assessment was important but did not want Council and PIFSC to lose the flexibility on how to apply the control rule.

B. Pelagic Issues

i. Regional Electronic Technologies

Council staff summarized the paper on the new electronic monitoring technologies that are being tested with the Hawaii shallow and deep-set longline fisheries.

In the discussion, members asked the NMFS PIRO participant if he could comment on when some of those technologies might find their way to the American Samoa longline fishery. He said one issue they have is connectivity. He added that fishing trips in the AS fishery are generally longer because they're not dealing with fresh fish and the ability to transmit data back to land has been difficult. He said the testing in Hawaii's longline fishery will eventually carry over to the local fishery but they need to make sure the systems are robust before full deployment.

ii. 2020 Territorial Bigeye Specifications

Council staff presented on the 2020 Territorial Bigeye Specifications and Options, and the members unanimously supported option 3. The Council Chair added that Japan and Korea had recently increased its transfer amount of bigeye tuna to China. The Vice Chair said the quota transfer funds provided much needed development opportunity for the US Pacific Territories.

4. American Samoa Reports

Council staff gave a summary of the contents of the drafted reports for American Samoa for the 181st Council Meeting. The reports completed that he reported on were the Legislative Report, the Community Activities Report and the Education and Outreach Report.

Regarding education and outreach, the Vice Chair requested Council staff send the scholarship announcement to all members so they can share them with any interested parties ahead of the deadline for submission next week. The members also discussed the Manu'a school pilot fishing tournament proposal developed by an AP member. They liked the proposal and wanted to know how they could be involved and whether the Council could support the event with prizes or even travel and lodging for members who wanted to help coordinate the event.

Regarding the island fisheries, an AP member said boats were just getting back to fishing after a string of bad weather. He said the boats not fishing meant he would be closed again this week. The Council Chair inquired about the American Samoa Department of Commerce's plans to create a training and incubator program with multiple alia tele vessels – specifically who they would have do the training.

5. Report on American Samoa Archipelago FEP AP Plan Activities

Council Staff informed the members that online applications were open for the American Samoa AP. The members discussed the open AP member seats and all agreed that alternates Nonu Tuisamoa and Joseph Faaita be made official members and the applications are to fill alternate positions. The Vice Chair requested Council staff to send the members the application link so they could share them with interested people. One AP member volunteered to assist in getting the word out to Manu'a fishermen who expressed interest in applying for the AP during the October Council Meeting when they traveled to Tutuila.

6. Island Fishery Issues and Activities

There was discussion of safety requirements for boat owners that were hard for small boat owners to comply with. Equipment such as flares is very expensive and has a single year expiration period. The Vice Chair suggested that local requirements should be reviewed that may not be congruent with federal statutes.

7. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The American Samoa Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

- **Regarding the interim measure for the American Samoa bottomfish fishery, the American Samoa Advisory Panel recommends the Council exempt the Manu'a fisheries from the interim measure and the subsequent ACL actions.**
- **Regarding the Territory Bottomfish MUS, the American Samoa Advisory Panel recommends the Council select Option 2 to retain flexibility and generate a new benchmark for the bottomfish MUS.**

- **Regarding the 2020 Territory Bigeye Catch Limit Specification, the American Samoa Advisory Panel recommends the Council select Option 3 allowing 2,000 mt longline bigeye limits and up to 2,000 mt transfer limits for the US Pacific Territories.**
- **Regarding the American Samoa Advisory Panel Membership, the AP recommends that Nonu Tuisamoa and Joseph Faaita be changed from alternates to members and applications be opened for new alternate members.**

9. Other Business

The Council Chair asked about the status of DMWR's response to ongoing audit of SFF subawards. Council staff responded saying they are coordinating with DMWR but they had yet to provide the needed records. The Chair asked for the Plan Team member's assistance in communicating the need to comply. She said she would speak to the DMWR Deputy Director.

The Council Chair also asked about the status of the shark law revision. Council staff reported that it was still pending as all the paperwork and public noticing had been completed but the no-take regulation remained because DMWR had still not filed the paperwork. The Council Chair asked Lavatai to help finish this process as it had been pending for over two years.

The Vice Chair suggested that future quota funds be used to construct a walkway from Lions Park to the end of the runway in the Pala Lagoon. It is a very popular shore-based fishing spot but the walk out to the point is a very difficult one.